

Belmont Council on Aging  
Minutes  
Meeting July 11, 2022

Meeting held via Zoom.

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: August 9, 2022  
TIME: 3:02 PM

Members Present: Tomi Olson (Chair), Dana Bickelman (ex officio), Margie Wayne, Ted Dukas, Maryann Scali, Joel Semuels, Judy Morrison, Andrea Paschal, Jane Shapiro, Karen Donelan (notetaker)

Members Not Present: Ellen Sullivan, Mark Paolillo (Select Board liaison), Chao Qiang-Lai

Others Present: Richard K Madden (Belmont resident), Janet (last name unrecorded)

Tomi Olson, Chair, opened the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

1. Senior Citizens' Concerns

Richard Madden (Belmont Citizen) attended the meeting to express concerns (based on his viewing of the Select Board meeting) that Council on Aging would not have more representation in the hiring of a new director. He expressed concerns about increased centralization of hiring for town positions, and expressed a preference for more democracy in these decisions. He hopes that the COA would express concerns about the process with the Town leadership. This was done previously; the Select Board's response to the COA was stated at their meeting on June 27.

The composition of the Interview Panel for the Director position is still unknown, as is the name of who will represent COA as has been promised. Joel Semuels had volunteered for the search committee and was contacted but has not received anything in writing. Maryann Scali is also concerned about seniors' representation. Judy Morrison suggested that the COA might be able to be involved in the process in other ways, perhaps to meet with finalists. The COA was given time to discuss the job description. (see New Business)

In another report, Tomi heard from a Sherman Gardens resident a complaint about personal decorations being required by the housing authority to be removed from front porches. She contacted Fire Chief DeStefano who will send Fire Prevention person to look at the situation and consider further discussion with the Belmont Housing Authority.

2. Approval of June 7, 2022, meeting minutes

Tomi Olson asked for an amendment indicating that both Nava and she attended the Springwell meeting, in part to discuss food and meal options. Minutes were approved as amended.

3. Updates and Correspondence

The Board scheduled dates for 2022-23 meetings either on Zoom or in person. All meetings are at 7 pm on Mondays, except for Tuesday meetings where noted. Future dates are:

August 1, 2022  
September 12, 2022  
October 3, 2022  
November 7, 2022  
December 5, 2022  
January 9, 2023  
Feb 6, 2023  
March 6, 2023  
April 3, 2023  
May 2, 2023 (Tuesday)  
June 6, 2023 (Tuesday)

A. Acting Director's Report and Assistant Director (combined as Dana Bickelman has started Acting Director position)

- Still doing interviews for Volunteer Coordinator. One or more good candidates may not be available until September. Maryann asked if seniors are familiar with the volunteer coordinator duties and the types of services they coordinate. Dana expressed desire for volunteers to help with connections with schools, services such as handyperson, technology assistance, rake leaves and shoveling, and assistance in the Center for a range of services. Many volunteer services lost during the pandemic. Position is 25 hours paid through Title 3 grant.
- No applications as yet for the full-time social worker posting; Dana has circulated it to many schools of social work, and it has been advertised. Approximately 60k salary, funded for 2 years by ARPA. Dana is seeking any other suggestions for posting or outreach to candidates.
- Farmers Market coupons should be available soon through Springwell and seniors have been asking. Delays were due to printing issues.
- Programs did well in June. July and August are expected to be busy. Blood pressure and fitness programs are returning and people are happy about those. Dana is still distributing at home COVID tests through July.
- A program on QR codes will be offered soon.
- Large monitor purchased with funds at the end of the fiscal year will help expand accessibility of hybrid meetings and enhance the visibility of remote participants.
- Watertown Sons of Italy helped to clean the bocce court.

C. Friends

Joel Semuels reports ramping up for the music event at the end of September. Tom Nutile's Band will be performing at Beech St on Sept 29, 2022. The orchestra is providing music at a very generous discounted price. Joel is recruiting sponsors and has had some replies. The event is being advertised with both English and Mandarin language posters. Sponsoring Donations to Friends may be

sent to 266 Beech Street; see previously distributed flyer from Joel. Tickets are \$10 to make the event affordable.

The November 19 Craft Fair will be happening 10-3 with Karen Nichols working with Rosemary Dulac of the Friends Board working on recruiting vendors. Bryant Nestico from East Cambridge Savings Bank also joined the Board.

Dana will help to promote these events through the newsletter and Belmont Media Center. The Friends are also doing media outreach. Volunteers will be needed for these events. Judy will contact the Belmontian Club contact –Joel will detail the needs for volunteers in an email to Judy and the new volunteer coordinator should be able to help.

#### D. Springwell

Jane Shapiro reports that the merger of Springwell with Baypath is complete as of July 1<sup>st</sup>; the name Springwell remains for now. Benefits have carried over without need for reapplication. The workforce shortage has had a major impact on services...considerable efforts at recruitment. The committee meets monthly and may switch from virtual only to hybrid this coming meeting.

#### E. Transportation Working Group

Margie reports that the waivers for the Volunteer Driver Program have been approved. Ellen and Margie have been working on this program, now awaiting the hiring of the volunteer coordinator. The Volunteer Driver Program should resume in the Fall, Judy Morrison commented that the coordinator will be very helpful to several efforts.

#### F. Age Friendly Action Committee-AFAC

Judy Morrison said the AFAC has started. 4 parts to the action plan with 4 subcommittees—Housing, Communications, Outdoor Spaces, Transportation/Walkability. New members include Amy Checkoway from School Committee, Theresa O'Connor from recreation, there will be a new Housing person, and some at-large volunteers are joining, League of Women Voters also participating. Transportation/Walkability subcommittee includes our own folks (Judy, Margie & Ellen). New attention on sidewalks and fall risks as several people have experienced falls—its recognized this may be a challenge but efforts will continue.

With regard to Housing issues, Tomi mentioned Belmont Housing Authority and Housing Trust differences; a recent article "Belmont Citizens Forum" has described the differences and is recommended to people who wish to understand the history of each entity. Tomi also serves on the Housing Trust board. Judy mentioned Age-Friendly housing goals are focused on adapting homes to facilitate older adult aging in place safely. The availability of housing will be addressed by other entities in town.

#### 4. Old Business:

##### A. Creating Inclusiveness and Making the COA Welcome to All

Tomi has been trying to work on integrating COA efforts with the work of Belmont's wider Diversity efforts. She made a recent contact through the Episcopal Church with a former resident who had several suggestions to offer. Dana reports that Town Administrator wrote to her about recommending a COA

member who might join the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Implementation task force. She will obtain more details on the time commitment and report back to the full Council by email.

5. New Business:

Comments to the Town Administrator on Director job description were discussed. After discussion of some provisions—including the desirability of a master’s level social worker--The Council on Aging voted to accept the job description as written. Tomi asked if we should vote on further communications with the Town Administrator. Joel noted that an email was previously sent to the Town Administrator about representation of the COA in the process and the Select Board responded.

Next meeting set for August 1, 2022 at 7:00 pm, either in person or hybrid.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Donelan, Board Member